

## Reporting Animal Cruelty

The Cayman Islands Department of Agriculture's Animal Welfare and Control Services unit is responsible for monitoring and assisting with the prevention of cruelty to animals, however, the unit strongly relies on the people of the islands to be its eyes and ears in the community. If you know of any animal that is being neglected or treated badly, please report it, by doing so you will help to ensure it gets the type of care that it deserves.

### What is Animal Cruelty?

The Animals Law (2015 Revision) Section 70(1) states that a person who intentionally makes an animal unnecessarily suffer, works an unfit animal, administers poison to the animal, operates on an animal without due care and humanity or tethers, or confines an animal as to cause unnecessary suffering, abandons an animal commits an offence of animal cruelty and is liable for prosecution under the law. The animals whose abuse is most often reported are dogs, cats, livestock and horses. Examples of animal cruelty are:

**Physical abuse** – tight collars causing neck wounds; open wounds or signs of multiple wounds not being treated; extreme thinness or emaciation – bones visible; discharge from nose or eyes; patchy or matted coat; owner hitting or otherwise physically abusing it (e.g. dragging/hanging animal on leash).

**Environmental abuse** – failure to provide adequate food, water or shelter; exposed to extreme heat or inclement weather; locked in a hot car; kept in area with feces, garbage or other objects that could harm them; being kept in an environment that is not suited to their needs where they are unable to stand, turn around and make normal movements (e.g. horses being kept in small spaces).

**Animal abandonment** – intentionally and recklessly leaving an animal at a location without providing minimum care, or making reasonable arrangements for the care of an animal.

**Malicious poisoning** – poisoning or exposing the animal to a toxic environment

**Organized cruelty** - Dogfighting, cockfighting and other forms of organized animal cruelty go hand in hand with other crimes; fights are extremely brutal with animals often fighting to the death

**Other types** - *Ritual abuse* - animals are either mutilated or sacrificed for religious purposes. *Bestiality or sexual abuse* of an animal.

Studies have shown that there is a correlation of animal abuse with violence against people. Animal abuse is frequently the first step towards future criminality such as domestic violence - abusers will either start with or will also target pets or serial murderers that initially started their behavior by hurting and killing animals.

## What should you do if you see or learn of cases of cruelty?

Each case is different, and a specific action does not necessarily apply in every case. Generally, you should:

- Assess if the cruelty is something that can be stopped immediately and whether you are able to safely intervene. Remember, the sort of person that would mistreat an animal would quite likely vent their anger on anyone who interferes
- If you are able to get photographs or videos do so; this is useful evidence.

## Filing a report

In the event of an urgent matter, a call can be made to 911, otherwise, information can be provided by way of [email](#) here. In any event, please be prepared to give as much of the following information as possible. Detailed information is for record purposes and enables the Animal Welfare Officer to better do their job and also to inform you of the result of their investigation. All reports are treated with strict confidence; your personal information if provided will remain confidential. Providing false information may well mean that we will not be able to resolve the matter.

## What information is needed to make a report?

**Your name, address and telephone number** – this information will be kept confidential and is very helpful in investigating the report as the investigating officer may need to contact you to verify details. Provision of information on any other potential witnesses is often helpful. However, if you do not wish to provide your personal information for whatever reason a report can be made anonymously using the [email](#) link provided. Although more challenging to investigate it is preferable to be aware of a potential issue rather than receive no information at all.

**Time, date and location of the incident** –provide the time and date of the incident. If the incident has occurred at a fixed location, provide the address details. If the animals are in a vehicle or on a trailer, please provide the license plate number along with a description of the vehicle.

**The persons involved** – if you have the names, addresses and contact information of the persons involved, please provide it. If not, a clear description of the persons involved will be helpful.

**Information on the animals** – provide information on what kind and number of animals involved. Descriptions of breeds and colors are helpful. Please also provide details on the condition of the animals. In the event that it is a matter of neglect, information such as whether the animal is in an environment where there is no food or water; if there is any shelter provided and is it clean; is it injured, is beneficial.

**The more detailed information that can be provided the more effectively the report can be investigated. The Department does however appreciate that there are circumstances where persons are not comfortable with providing certain information and anonymous reports are appreciated, accepted and investigated to the best of our ability.**

### **What happens after you make the report?**

An officer will investigate the report and make a decision based on what they find; their findings will determine one or more of the following actions taken:

- Educating the animal owner or person in charge of the animal, providing advice on animal ownership responsibilities and care
- Officially warn the animal owner or responsible person in writing, especially if a previous verbal notification was given. Directions will be given to address the issues at hand.
- Collection of evidence for prosecution. In the event the matter is one for prosecution, evidence will be collected and compiled so that the animal owner or person responsible can be charged with an offence
- Seizure of animals. Sometimes the officer believes that the only way to guarantee that the animals will be properly cared for is by removing them. This is only done in extreme situations.

When conducting animal cruelty or neglect investigations, what might seem cruel to an observer may not be determined punishable by a court of law. A key example is a dog that is left alone at all times, or that is kept chained up outside during all seasons with only a doghouse as shelter. Many people would say that in their opinion this constitutes abuse and/or neglect. While most responsible animal owners would not treat their companion animals in such a way, these conditions may not be constituted as one that can be prosecuted under the Animals Law. To err on the side of caution, always report what you see if you consider it to be abuse or neglect.

Please note:

- Residents should keep in mind that the agency operates with limited personnel and resources; however, every effort is made to ensure that the incident is investigated in a timely manner.
- Animal cruelty investigations do not include dangerous animals, loose livestock or barking dogs. These should be report accordingly:
  - o Dangerous animals/barking dogs – Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS)
  - o Loose livestock - call 911
  - o Barking dogs – Department of Agriculture – the report will be investigated to ascertain the welfare of the animal; in the event it becomes a persistent matter, it will be reported to the RCIPS
- To report a dead animal (on the road, etc.), please contact the Department of Environmental Health on 949-6696

Finally, do not be afraid to get involved in any legal proceedings that may result. If you felt strongly enough to report the matter, you should be prepared to assist with whatever has to be done to get the matter rectified and bring offenders to justice.

*“The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing” – Albert Einstein*