



Washtenaw County Animal Impound Facility Legal and Financial Summary

More than just “shooting dogs”

As the County impound facility (and the only licensed animal shelter in Washtenaw County), HSHV takes in all of the animals (dogs, cats and other domestics) found “running loose”, those that are unlicensed, and animals brought in for other legal reasons, including bite cases, rabies quarantines, animal abandonment on vacant properties and during legal evictions, dogs in violation of additional local ordinances related to aggression and licensing, and animal cruelty cases.

In addition to those related to the “1919 Dog Law” (MCLA 287) and subsequent common law (*Youngblood v County of Jackson*); animal cruelty statutes related to abuse, abandonment and neglect (MCLA 750.49, 755.50, 755.50b); stray hold laws and subsequent amendments and attorney general opinions (MCLA 287), dog and cat bite quarantines/rabies testing and human exposures to wildlife, as required by the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Those animals that are required to be impounded must be housed in a facility licensed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, which enforces a long list of regulations related to the safe, healthy and humane care of those animals (*see* June 9, 2011 and July 22, 2011 letters summarizing current regulations and policy interpretations issued by MDARD).

Legal Hold Times

At a minimum, the County impound facility **must care for a variety of stray and legally seized animals, including:**

- Stray dogs, cats and other small domestics (minimum legal hold time, 4-7 days but cannot include the first 24 hours, weekends or State recognized holidays, so in practicality becomes 7-10 days)
- Abandoned animals (minimum legal hold time, 10 days)
- Animals Held for Bite/Rabies Quarantines (minimum legal hold time, 10 days)
- Court Mandated Holds: Dogs in process of being deemed dangerous through court system (hold times vary from 2 – 6 weeks)
- Sick wildlife exposed to humans or pets (sick wildlife are picked up as a part of County animal control duties related to the prevention of the spread of contagious disease)
- Animal Cruelty Investigations (hold times vary from 2 – 14 months, depending on length of legal process, see just one example of hundreds in a year)

Just One Case of Animal Cruelty Investigation

In July, HSHV took in 14 animals from a mentally unstable and volatile man who was being charged with several counts of felony animal cruelty. His charges stemmed from a call reported to us by the Ann Arbor Police Department regarding 4 dogs locked in an airtight car on a 96 degree day. Upon formal investigation it was discovered that he had many more animals at his home, all severely neglected. One had recently starved to death; her body just left lying on the floor. During the investigation we had to get a restraining order against the man due to threats involving mention of the use of an AK-47 against our Investigator and our animal care staff. He also threatened public officials and has been in and out

of jail since July. His home has since been condemned. While he goes the Washtenaw County judicial system, his animals (living **evidence** still legally owned as “property” by the defendant) must remain in the care and custody of HSHV until released by a judge. Animal cruelty can be a misdemeanor or a felony. These are often very serious crimes and those guilty of them are typically people involved in other criminal and violent activity and bringing them to justice benefits the entire community. As such, the costs, (including the care and custody of the innocent victims) related to enforcement are not just moral and humane, but are a real and necessary part of the legal process. Whether a case involves one animal or 45 animals, they all require care until the process is complete. This is the job of a county impound facility, not the local, entirely private humane society. In this particular case, these animals have so far received approximately 1400 days of care. At an average of \$28 a day, they animals have cost HSHV almost \$40,000 -- 8% of our \$500,000 county contract but only.3% of all the stray and legally seized animals that came through our door.

HSHV Impound Facility Expenses

HSHV already subsidizes the expenses related to County impounded animals and animal control-related duties at a substantial rate. In the last 12 months about 4,500 animals received nearly 48,000 total days of care. The cost of such investment is:

Housing Including Veterinary Care	\$1,188,400
Cruelty Investigations & Animal Rescue	\$193,100
Facilities	\$238,000
Administration & Human Resources	<u>\$65,772</u>
	\$1,685,272
County Contract Amount	(\$500,000)

