

# VACA Takes a Stand!

Oct 25 2005

VACA Board offers Officer Safety Recommendations

Virginia Animal Control Association Officer Safety Statement

June 20, 2005



VACA recognizes the threats Animal Control Officers encounter in the field from both dangerous animals and violent subjects. Animal Control Officers, as with any other law enforcement officer, enforce felony & misdemeanor criminal statutes, may arrest offenders, confiscate property, or issue Virginia Uniform Summonses. In the majority of jurisdictions in the Commonwealth, Animal Control Officers are uniformed officers who must display a badge of office when performing their duties. For these reasons, VACA endorses the following protective gear and training for all Animal Control Officers. VACA recommends that all Animal Control Officers be periodically recertified in the use of all issued equipment.

## 1. Firearms

Animal Control Officers are encountering more vicious animals than ever before. Violent felons frequently maintain animals as protection for their operations posing threats to both officer and public safety. In some cases, firearms are the only effective method for protecting the public and the officer from the imminent threat of death.

VACA recommends that Animal Control Officers be properly trained and certified in the use of side arms and long guns. All officers should be required to meet the same training requirements for the use of a firearm and subjected to the same restrictions that apply to other law enforcement officers. Animal Control Officers should be issued side arms and long guns as part of their standard equipment.

## 2. Ballistic Protective Vests

Animal Control Officers encounter subjects with the same or greater frequency than regular law enforcement officers. Some of these individuals are armed and can present an immediate threat to officer safety.

VACA recommends that Animal Control Officers be equipped with properly fitted and inspected ballistic protective vests that are replaced in accordance with manufacturer's recommended standards. Animal Control Officers should be issued ballistic protective vests as part of their standard equipment.

### 3. Intermediate Weapons

Animal Control Officers encounter both persons and animals for which immediate weapons, such as batons or pepper spray, serve as an adequate control measure to prevent or stop an attack.

VACA recommends that Animal Control Officers be properly trained and certified in the use of batons and pepper spray as a means of protection. All officers should be required to meet the same training requirements for the use of batons and pepper spray and subjected to the same restrictions that apply to other law enforcement officers. Animal Control Officers should be issued intermediate weapons as part of their basic equipment.

### 4. Portable Radios

Animal Control Officers routinely operate in wide areas with little or no support in the field. Officers need to be able to communicate immediately with support staff and other public safety agencies such as police, sheriffs, and paramedics in order to protect public and officer safety.

VACA recommends that each Animal Control Officer be equipped with a portable radio capable of interfacing with local public safety agencies to coordinate responses. In areas where portable radios are ineffective, cellular telephones are an acceptable alternative. Animal Control Officers should be issued portable radios as part of their standard equipment.

### 5. Defensive Tactics Training

Animal Control Officers routinely encounter difficult subjects and animals. In many of these cases, alternatives to lethal force or intermediate force are required. Animal Control Officers should be able to respond to the level of threat with the proper level of force that includes both verbal and physical restraint techniques.

VACA recommends that each Animal Control Officer receive training and certification in non-lethal defensive tactics. All officers should be required to meet the same requirements as other law enforcement officers and be subject to the same restrictions that apply to law enforcement officers.

### 6. First Responder Training

Animal Control Officers routinely deal with injuries resulting from animal attacks or animal capture accidents. Often, officers are in the field without close support and may be the first person on scene in at an incident.

VACA recommends that all Animal Control Officers receive proper training and certification as First Responders. This includes first aid, CPR, and associated training commensurate with other law enforcement officers. Animal Control Officer's vehicles should be issued first aid kits as part of their standard equipment.