

## Animal Matters

## Where is justice for animals in Burke County?

*"Speak for those who cannot speak; seek justice for all those on the verge of destruction."*

— Proverbs 31:8 (ISV)

Anger and outrage over the recent shootings that wounded and killed so many cats, calling for justice for those responsible, shows how much people care about animals, about cats. The outpouring of compassion and concern for these cats has been phenomenal, even reaching national attention and the offer of a \$5,000 reward by PETA to apprehend the criminals.

This incident and the effects on the cats and those wanting to help them call attention to why it's important that our laws protect animals. The Burke County animal ordinance is the instrument for doing that.

Two animal ordinances have been submitted to our county commissioners, one written by Animal Control and county personnel, the other by animal advocates in the county. In this article, ACO



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**Justice can be blind for animals sometimes.**

refers to the ordinance written by Burke County Animal Control and county staff, and AWO refers to the ordinance written by animal-welfare advocates. What happened to the cats illustrates some stark differences between the two proposals.

**ACO:** BCAC exempts itself and animal-shelter staffers from standards of care they establish for everyone else. AC can euthanize any impounded

animal that is wounded or sick and shall have no liability for doing so.

**AWO:** Animal Control shall provide animals with fresh food and water daily, humane care and relief from suffering. AC shall partner with animal-welfare groups to take all animals, especially any that are sick or injured. These groups assume financial responsibility to get the animals medical treatment, saving the

county money and saving animal lives.

**ACO:** When a cat-rescue group asked that the two surviving cats be released to it, it was told that Animal Control could release animals only to BCFFA. Since the ACO ordinance states that just one group meets requirements to pull animals, all other animals die.

**AWO:** All local animal-welfare groups can pull from the shelter so more animals are saved. Surrounding county shelters post animals on their websites and beg area rescue groups to take them. The only requirement is that the rescue is a 501(c)(3) and it fills out a simple form that releases the animals to its care.

**ACO:** For the few animals that go to BCFFA, if another animal rescue is willing to redeem that animal, the rescue group must pay to redeem it.

**AWO:** Animal-rescue groups provide not only medical treatment for all sick and injured pets they take in, but they make sure all pets are spayed and neutered before put-

ting them up for adoption. They should pay no fee to AC.

**ACO:** Makes it illegal for people, and presumably rescues, to take in a stray or even feed it. It stipulates that people must notify Animal Control of any stray that shows up. Once at the shelter, that animal has a holding period of three days before it is killed.

**AWO:** Encourages people to take in strays and feed them and even adopt them or get help adopting them. This act of kindness saves the county the trouble and expense of housing them and killing them. It also stipulates that any animals that end up at the county shelter stay as long as possible to give them a better chance of being adopted.

**ACO:** If a stray is not claimed within 72 hours, it can be offered for adoption to a nonprofit rescue group, but only if that group is registered with Animal Control and inspected by the Department of Agriculture. It attempts to define animal-rescue organizations

as kennels and impose inspection requirements that state law applies only to organizations that have a physical facility. This stipulation prevents foster-based rescues from pulling animals from the shelter. No other county does this.

**AWO:** Animal Control shall partner with local animal-welfare groups to take animals. This includes mothers with babies, orphans, sick or injured animals, older pets, and those simply stressed in a shelter environment, as well as healthy, immediately adoptable animals.

**ACO:** Animal Control shall investigate animal abuse, neglect and cruelty, but it does not do much to encourage enforcement.

**AWO:** The ordinance is more detailed and specific regarding animal abuse, neglect and cruelty, therefore enabling a greater ability for enforcement.

Which version do you think provides justice for the animals and saves more animal lives?

Submitted by Lynda Garibaldi,  
director of Cats' Cradle.