

Telephone tips

Each telephone call your agency or society receives is an opportunity for you to reach out into the community. Providing information and service by phone should be a major part of your overall plan to solve animal problems in your area.

- Your receptionists should be courteous and pleasant, and they should be information "generalists." As an animal control facility, you should provide direct and informative answers to as many questions as possible -- if you do not have the information or if the caller should be talking to another agency or group, then refer him or her to another source.
- You can speed calls along by providing receptionists with answer sheets for the commonly asked questions. Include information or the numbers of other parties to be contacted on questions about trapping, dead animal pickup, adoption policies, animal control laws, child abuse, welfare services and the other topics that generally come up.
- You may wish to prepare a paragraph on exactly what your agency or organization does that can be read quickly to a caller or mailed out. This saves the receptionist having to create an explanation of your purposes for each call.
- Keep a telephone log of each call and how it was resolved. Keep track of how many calls concern dead animal pickup, services for people, pet care -- then you will have an idea of the information the public needs from your community education program. (Such a log can also help with budgeting decisions.)

Fairfax County (VA) Animal Control has found that often citizens who telephone to complain about animal problems are not at home by the time the warden visits them to follow up on the call. Wardens now carry a supply of the card reproduced here, which they can fill in and leave in the complainant's mail box or mail to them. Director Richard Amity says the card has helped cut down on the number of calls from complainants with questions on how their complaint was resolved. ■

In response to your recent request for assistance regarding an animal problem, the following action was taken:

_____ The case was investigated by an Animal Warden.

_____ Your area was patrolled.

_____ Legal action was taken against an animal owner.

_____ Animals were impounded.

Your comments or suggestions are welcome.

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