Hot Springs (AR) Animal Control Director John Seales (400 Kimery Lane, Hot Springs, AR 71901) reports good results from three efforts to improve animal control:

- Public image -- The Animal Control Department is a separate unit within the city government, and the officers have uniforms. Seales says the well-groomed, uniformed officers are "respected as Animal Control Officers, not dog catchers."

- Law enforcement -- When animal control officers spot a free-roaming dog, they follow it to locate the owner, since the dog is generally run home. The owner is given an owners warning for the first violation of the leash law. If the owner cannot be located, the dog is impounded and the owner must pay a fine to reclaim it.

The courtesy warning states in part: "It is unlawful to let your dog run at large within the City of Hot Springs. Dog must be kept confined on a leash, or within an enclosure on the premises of the owner... This warning has been recorded at the Animal Control Office. Any other violation will result in a summons to appear in court... We ask for your cooperation in this matter with the hope that Hot Springs can be made a more pleasant place to live for both the people and their pets."

On the second violation, the owner receives a summons to appear in court. The department has a solid case at this point because of the courtesy warning, and stiff fines are generally imposed.

- Education -- Animal control officers present educational programs in area schools and at civic clubs and other groups on proper care for pets and the importance of obeying the leash law. The department also has a section in the Sunday edition of the local newspaper, reporting violations of the leash law and providing animal care tips and other information.

Radio public service announcements can help get your message to the community. Radio (and television) stations must give a certain amount of air time to PSAs.

Remember, however, that radio stations are commercial enterprises. While they may be sympathetic to your cause, they are not obligated to air your announcements. Also, there are many good causes in your area, competing for the public service air time.

To increase your chances of having your messages read on the air, make sure they are of importance to the entire community and are presented in the best possible form. Adapt your message to your audience -- if many people in your area speak Spanish, have your messages translated.

Also, different stations prefer different lengths for PSAs, so you should check this in advance. An announcement with 25 average-length words takes about 10 seconds, 50 words take about 20 seconds and 150 words take about 60 seconds.

The copy should be typed, double or triple spaced, on one side of 8½" x 11" paper. Your organization's letterhead stationery is acceptable. If you use plain paper, type the top your organization's name and the name and telephone number of the person to contact for more information.

Start the copy one-third of the way down the first page, and leave ample margins. Remember to use a clean typewriter ribbon.

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