

Frequently Asked Questions About

Charles County
Animal Regulations



 Owning an animal is a privilege that carries responsibilities. With proper care and affection, pet ownership can be a very rewarding experience.

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Charles County Animal Regulations

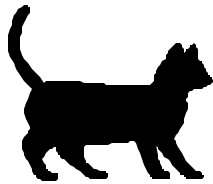
Dear Citizens of Charles County:

Pets are an important part of our community. Please help us keep the County a safe, clean and friendly place to live through responsible, humane pet ownership. We are pleased to provide the following information to you regarding our *Charles County Animal Regulations*.

C. Edward Tucker, Chief
Charles County Animal Control Services

1. What are the duties of a responsible pet owner?

You should exercise reasonable care and take all necessary steps and precautions to protect other people, property, and animals from injuries or damage which might result from the animal's behavior, regardless of whether the behavior is motivated by playfulness, fear, sickness, or ferocity.



In addition, if a minor is the custodian of an animal, the parent or guardian is still responsible for ensuring compliance with regulations and State codes.

Don't forget that animals may not be sold or given to a minor without the written consent of the parent or legal guardian.



2. What must I do to properly immunize my animal from rabies?

State and County laws require that all dogs, cats, and ferrets four months or older be immunized with an anti-rabies vaccine administered by a licensed veterinarian.

The veterinarian will issue you a certificate of immunization. **DO NOT LOOSE THIS CERTIFICATE!** You should keep it in a safe place and be able to show it to an Animal Control Officer, Health Officer, or any other law enforcement officer upon request.



Reduced-cost rabies clinics are held periodically throughout the County. Call Charles County Animal Control Services at 301-608-3425 or the Tri-County Animal Shelter at 301 932-1713 or 1-800-903-1992 for more information.



3. What are the rules about licensing my animal?

Dogs four months or older must be licensed. The license is only good for a year, therefore, you need to renew the license annually.

You can purchase a license through the Charles County Treasurer's Office, Charles County Animal Control, the Charles County Humane Society, and other participating locations. The cost is \$15 for an unaltered male or female, or \$2 for a neutered male or spayed female.

If you own a certified Seeing Eye Dog, Hearing Dog, governmental police dog, or other certified dog that is trained to assist the physically handicapped, you are not required to pay the annual fee but you still need to license your dog every year.

Dogs that are being kept at shelters are exempt from licensing until they are adopted or returned to their owner.



4. What are the County's regulations regarding animal care?

You must provide your animal with sufficient, wholesome and nutritious food; clean, cool water in sufficient quantities; proper air, shelter, space, and protection from the weather; veterinary care, when needed, to prevent suffering; and humane care and treatment at all times.

Remember, when transporting your animal in a vehicle, the animal must be safely confined. Your animal is not allowed to ride in an unenclosed area of your vehicle unless he/she is confined by a securely affixed, well-ventilated cage, or other device designated to safely prevent the animal from falling or jumping from your vehicle.



5. Can I let my animal roam around?

NO! It is against the law for any person, partnership or corporation to allow their animal to be at large. At large means allowing any animal (dog, cat, or other) to be away from its owner's property not under the restraint of a person capable of controlling the animal. In general the animal must be controlled by a leash.

This law does not apply to a dog undergoing supervised obedience training or while actually engaged in the sport of hunting in an authorized area while supervised by a competent person.



6. Is there a "pooper scooper" law in Charles County?

YES! It is against the law to allow your domestic animal to defecate on public property, or private property that does not belong to the pet's owner. Any waste must be removed and disposed of in a proper and sanitary manner.



7. What is the Animal Matters Hearing Board?

The Animal Matters Hearing Board hears and decides, upon receipt of a written complaint, whether an animal, or facility regulated by *Charles County Animal Regulations*, constitutes a **public nuisance or is dangerous and/or vicious**. The Board consists of not more than nine members appointed by the County Commissioners. These members include a representative from the Charles County Office of the Sheriff, Charles County Humane Society, a veterinarian licensed to practice in Charles County, and four other Charles County Citizens.



8. When could my animal be considered a public nuisance?

If the owner allows it to:

- ~ roam around;
- ~ damage the property of anyone other than its owner;
- ~ molest or intimidate pedestrians or passersby;
- ~ chase vehicles;
- ~ bark or make other harsh or excessive noise so as to disturb the quiet, comfort, or repose of members of the community
- ~ create an unreasonable annoyance or discomfort, by odor or any other means, to neighbors or others in close proximity to the premises where the animal is kept.
- ~ defecate on public property, and/or defecate or urinate on private property (other than that of the owner); or
- ~ continue or repeat that behavior or activity for which the animal has previously been determined by the Board after notice to its owner and a hearing, to be in violation of any of these regulations and/or a public nuisance by virtue of being a menace to the public health, welfare or safety.



If you feel an animal in your neighborhood is a public nuisance, and wish the County to take action, you must file a written complaint with the Animal Matters Hearing Board, which will hear and decide the matter. A white complaint form is included in the center of this publication. Complete both sides of the form and send to: Animal Matters Hearing Board for Charles County, Maryland, P.O. Box 2150, Charles County Government Building, La Plata, Maryland 20646. For more information, call the County Attorney's office at (301) 645-0517 or (301) 870-2260.



9. How could my animal be impounded?

If your animal is in violation of any of the Charles County Animal Regulations or the Annotated Code of Maryland, it can be immediately and humanely impounded and housed at the animal shelter or its designated agent. In addition to or in lieu of impounding your animal, an Animal Control Officer may issue you a notice of violation.

If your animal is impounded, it will be kept for no less than three working days unless the animal is contagiously ill or severely injured.

When you reclaim your animal, you will have to pay fees established by the Sheltering Authority. You also will have to show proof of ownership, including a current rabies vaccination and County license.

If your animal is impounded three times within a twelve-month period, it shall remain in the Shelter until you appear before the Animal Matters Hearing Board's next scheduled hearing. The Board will determine the necessary means to resolve the violations and levy any applicable fines and fees.



10. What kind of fines are there? How much will they cost me?

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| Interference with an Animal Control Officer | \$50 |
| Cruelty | \$50-\$500 |
| Rabies prevention | |
| Failure to vaccinate | \$100 |
| Failure to quarantine | \$100 |
| Licensing - Failure to obtain a (n): | |
| Individual | \$35 |
| Commercial Animal Establishment | \$150 |
| Animal care (per offense. Not to exceed \$100 per animal) | \$25 |
| Animal riding in an open vehicle | \$35 |
| Animal at Large | \$35 |
| Female in Season, Improperly Confined | \$35 |
| Allowing an animal to urinate/defecate on private property | \$35 |
| Allowing an animal to defecate on public property | \$35 |
| Public Nuisance | \$50-\$100 |
| Dangerous or Vicious or Potentially Dangerous | \$50-\$500 |

If you have any further questions, call Charles County Animal Control Services at 301-609-3425 or the Tri-County Animal Shelter at 301 932-1713 or 1-800-903-1992. Visit the Shelter web page on the County's web site, www.charlescounty.org. The Shelter is located at 6707 Animal Shelter Road, Hughesville, MD 20637, on Route 231 approximately 3.5 miles from the intersection of Route 5. Copies of the Charles County Animal Regulations are available from Animal Control Services for a \$1 fee.

Conduct of Public Hearing Before Animal Matters Hearing Board

1. All persons who testify or make statements shall be required to take an oath as administered by the Clerk of the Animal Matters Hearing Board.
2. All persons who testify or make statements shall be required to come to an area designated by the Chairman and state their name and address in order that the proceedings may be properly recorded. Testimony may be limited in time by the Board.
3. Written statements may not be accepted by the Board. Each witness should be present in order to be questioned.
4. You may bring witnesses to testify on your behalf.
5. You may bring exhibits such as properly marked and dated photographs, a list of the times and dates the animal disturbed you, and video tapes. If a video tape is to be presented, you must notify the Clerk to the Animal Matters Hearing Board at least seven days prior to the scheduled hearing so that equipment can be available.
6. If testimony of an Animal Control Officer or other County employee is required, you must provide notice in writing to the Clerk of the Animal Matters Hearing Board at least seven days prior to the hearing.
7. Owners of dogs must bring the subject animal's rabies vaccination certificate and County license to the hearing. Owners of cats must bring the subject animal's rabies vaccination certificate.
8. Failure of a complainant to appear at the hearing will result in dismissal of the case.
9. Failure of an Owner to appear at the hearing, after being served with notice of the hearing and a copy of the complaint, may result in a decision being made, and restrictions and fines imposed on the Owner, based solely upon the Complainant's testimony and any other evidence presented at the hearing.
10. In the event you do not agree with the Board's decision, you have thirty (30) days to file an appeal, which must be in writing. We cannot assist you in the appeal process. If you have any questions about your rights, you should contact an attorney other than the County Attorney or the Assistant County Attorney.

To file a complaint with the Animal Matters Hearing Board for Charles County, please check the appropriate Section and Subsection(s) listed below that apply, complete the basis of complaint form on the other side of this page, then mail the entire section to the address at the top of the form. Information on the public hearing process is on page 6 of the booklet. Do not forget to sign the form and include a telephone number where you can be contacted if further information is needed.

Check the appropriate Section and Subsection(s) that apply:

CHAPTER 230

SECTION 12.4 -- PUBLIC NUISANCE

- 12.4.A.1 be at large
- 12.4.A.2 damage the property of anyone other than its owner
- 12.4.A.3 molest pedestrians, neighbors or passersby
- 12.4.A.4 intimidate pedestrians, neighbors or passersby. Intimidation should be defined as a reasonable prudent person under same and/or similar circumstances and whether that person would have been intimidated by the actions of the animal in question.
- 12.4.A.5 chase vehicles
- 12.4.A.6 bark or make other harsh or excessive noise so as to disturb the quiet, comfort, or repose of members of the community as reflected by reasonable persons with normal sensitivities to noise
- 12.4.A.7 foul the air by odor and thereby create unreasonable annoyance or discomfort to neighbors or others in close proximity to the premises where the animal is kept or harbored
- 12.4.A.8 allow to defecate on public property and/or urinate/defecate on private property
- 12.4.A.9 continue or repeat that behavior for which the animal has previously been determined by the Board to be a public nuisance by virtue of being a menace to the public health, welfare, or safety

SECTION 12.5 -- DANGEROUS AND/OR VICIOUS ANIMALS

- 12.5.A.1 any animal which has inflicted injury on a human being without provocation on public or private property
- 12.5.A.2 any animal which has injured or killed a domestic animal without provocation
- 12.5.A.3 any animal which has a vicious nature, disposition and/or propensity which is known or should be known by its owner
- 12.5.A.4 any animal owned or harbored primarily or in part for the purpose of animal fighting, or any animal trained for animal fighting
- 12.5.A.5 any animal not owned by a governmental or law enforcement unit, used primarily to guard public or private property
- 12.5.C Potentially dangerous animal, any animal that constitutes by its actions, a physical threat to human beings, other domestic animals, or both

I understand that I **MUST** appear for hearing on this matter on the date and time set by the Animal Control Board. I further understand that I have the burden of substantiating each and every alleged violation.

I DO SOLEMNLY DECLARE AND AFFIRM, UNDER PENALTIES OF PERJURY, THAT THE MATTERS AND FACTS SET FORTH IN THE FOREGOING APPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION, AND BELIEF.

Day and Evening
Telephone Numbers

Complainant's Signature

Turn over and complete other side →



Charles County Commissioners

Wayne Cooper, President

Edith J. Patterson, Vice President

Reuben B. Collins, II

Samuel N. Graves, Jr.

Gary V. Hodge

Mission Statement

The mission of Charles County Government is to provide our citizens the highest quality service possible in a timely, efficient and courteous manner. To achieve this goal, government must be operated in an open and accessible atmosphere, be based on comprehensive long- and short-term planning and have an appropriate managerial organization tempered by fiscal responsibility.

Vision Statement

Charles County is a place where all people thrive and businesses grow and prosper; where the preservation of our heritage and environment is paramount; where government services to its citizens are provided at the highest level of excellence; and where the quality of life is the best in the nation.

Equal Opportunity County ~ Say No To Drugs

Charles County Animal Control Services
10425 Audie Lane
P.O. Box 2150
La Plata, Maryland 20646