THE ROLE OF TODAY’S ACO
CREATING A POSITIVE PUBLIC IMAGE
INTRODUCTION

George W. Harding, IV  MBA CAWA

- Executive Director – [National Animal Care & Control Association](#)
  - 4,000+ Current NACA Individual and Agency Members
  - 11,000+ Animal Care & Control Professionals Trained by NACA
- Alphabet Soup?
  - Master of Business Administration, Baker University
  - Bachelor of Science in Conservation Enforcement, University of Central Missouri
  - Certified Animal Welfare Administrator, Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA)
- Background
  - 22 Years in Animal Care & Control
How do we define today’s Animal Control Officer (ACO)?
MY GOALS FOR THIS TRAINING:

• Discuss the history of the Animal Control Officer
• Define the roles and responsibilities of an ACO
• Discuss the expectations of an ACO in today’s ever-changing environment
• Explain the importance of a structured ACO training
• Discuss how to build a positive public image
• Discuss how to handle common challenges to your image
HISTORY OF ANIMAL CONTROL

- When: Late 1880s
- Where: Growing towns and cities
- Why: Developed as a response to rabies and stray dogs
- How: Round up and mass killing of stray dogs

The Classic “Dog Catcher” Image
An image portrayed by Walt Disney, and one we are still trying to overcome.
Thanks Walt!
A MORE HUMANE APPROACH

In 1866, Henry Bergh, Founded the ASPCA in New York

In 1894, the ASPCA took over Animal Control duties for the City of New York and continued for next 100 years

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1866</th>
<th>1877</th>
<th>1894</th>
<th>1954</th>
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1877 American Humane Association (AHA)

1954 Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)

1978 National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA)
ANIMAL CONTROL OR ANIMAL WELFARE
Are they really so different?

Definition of Animal Control
Protecting People from Animals

Definition of Animal Welfare
Protecting Animals from People

“There no longer needs to be two definitions, but one that is representative of what an officer today really does, which is to protect the health, welfare, and safety of BOTH people and animals within their community” – George W. Harding, IV
GROUP EXERCISE:
WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF AN ACO?

• Break into groups of 4-5
  – Choose someone to take notes
  – Choose someone to present

• As group:
  – Create your own definition for today’s Animal Control Officer
  – List the top five things you group thinks an ACO does
ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER DEFINED

True Definition

The actual definition for an Animal Control/Humane Officer is found in the local state statute, county code or municipal ordinance that defines your power of authority.

Example (Lee Summit, MO):

The Supervisor of Animal Control or anyone having the authority of an Animal Control Officer, Humane Officer or City Police Officer shall have the duty of enforcing all the terms and provisions of this chapter and shall be empowered to issue a citation and summons to Municipal Court for violations thereof.
TODAY’S ACO REQUIRES A DIVERSE SET OF SKILLS

• What do each of the hats represent?
  – Police Officer
  – Fire Fighter
  – Reporter
  – Construction Worker
  – Lawyer
  – Doctor (Veterinarian)
  – Accountant
  – Can you think of any more?
  – Valued LEADER in the Community!
PATH TO BEING A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Educated

Strategically Trained

Focused Career Path

Diverse Skills Set

Public Awareness has helped to reinvent the image of the Animal Control Officer
PUBLIC IMAGE

• What is your Public Image?
  – Public Image is the perception of your competence and character as created by those you encounter, it is greatly influenced by what you do, and how you actually do it, but it is their perception of you, not who you actually are.
CREATING A POSITIVE PUBLIC IMAGE

• How do Animal Control Officers create a positive public image?
  – Receive Proper Training and Continually Update Skills
  – Make a Good First Impression
  – Handle Emotionally Charged Situations in a Professional Manner
TRAINING

• Training
  – The key to creating a positive public image is for Animal Control Officers to be well trained and regularly update their skills through training.
    • Animal Care & Control Association of Tennessee
    • NACA
    • Code 3 Associates
    • ASPCA
    • HSUS
    • Law Enforcement Academies
    • Others??
EDUCATION AND STRATEGIC TRAINING

• Past:
  – On the Job Training - Baptism by fire
  – Until the late 1980’s, very little formalized training existed for ACOs
    *(Generally only offered by state associations, or national groups as short conferences)*

• Present:
  – NACA Standardized Training for ACO’s
    – National ACO Certification – NACAs 1st class held in 1989
    – NACA & Code 3 collaborate to develop dual certification training for ACO and Cruelty Investigators
      – Accredited by Colorado State University

• Future:
  – Imagine the possibilities!
IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC TRAINING

- Creates Credibility
- Reduces Liability
- Improves Efficiency

Positive Public Image

- Improves Customer Service
- Builds Self-Confidence
- Creates Personal Growth
A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

• It only takes a few seconds, or a brief glance, for a person who is unfamiliar with you to evaluate who you are based solely upon your appearance and demeanor.
• There are no second chances to make a first impression.
KEYS TO MAKING A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

• Dress for Success
• Use Proper Language
• Know Your Audience
• Show Empathy and Convey Sincerity
DRESS FOR SUCCESS

• To be taken seriously, you need to not only act the part, but need to look the part as well. How you look is just as important as how you conduct yourself.

• Extensions of Yourself
  – Vehicle
  – Office
  – Locker
  – Other?
USE PROPER LANGUAGE

- Avoid Slang
- Avoid Jargon
- No Sarcasm
- No Snide Comments
- No Profanity
KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- Knowing Your Audience
  - Education
  - Social Status
  - Ethnicity
  - Gender
  - Mental Awareness
    - Illness
    - Impairment
  - Location
EMPATHY AND SINCERITY

• What are Empathy and Sincerity?
  – Empathy is the capability to appreciate, understand and accept another person’s emotions.
  – Sincerity is being honesty and genuine.
CAN YOU HANDLE AN APE?

• What is an APE?
  – Acute Political Emergency
• What makes APE handling important to Animal Control Officers?
THE COMMON APE

The APE Comes in Many Forms

- High Profile Cases
  - Animal Hoarding
  - Animal Related Human Death
  - Extreme Abuse

- Prominent Victims or Offenders
  - Elected Official
  - Celebrity
  - Law Enforcement Official

- Employee Disputes
  - Complaints Against Employees
  - Employee Performance Issues
  - Employee v. Employee Issues
  - Employees v. Management Issues

- Neighborhood Quarrels
  - Intense Media Coverage
  - Others?
APE HANDLING 101

• How to Deal with the Common APE
  – Integrity
  – Consistency
  – Listen Before You Respond
  – Think Strategically and Understand the BIG Picture
  – Maintain Your Professionalism
  – Document Everything, Always!
PITFALLS TO AVOID

• Internet and Social Media
  – Do everything within your power to keep your private life separate from your professional life.
  – Assume everything you post, or send in an email, has the potential to be found, and know it will be open to interpretation and feedback.
  – Use the Grandmother rule before sharing or hitting send.

• Assume Everything You Do is Being Recorded
  – Should ACOs be wearing body cameras?
Final Thought on Image

• Character and Reputation
  – John Wooden
    • The true test of a man’s character is what he does when no one is watching.
    • Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.
Questions?

Questions are guaranteed in life; Answers aren't.
The End
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REFERENCES & RESOURCES

• NACA Training Programs
  – http://www.nacanet.org/?page=Training_Schedule

• ASPCA – History
  – https://www.aspca.org/about-us/about-the-asPCA/history-asPCA