Is Your Pet an Outlaw?

Prince George's County and the City of College Park have many laws within the animal code that pertain to both dogs and cats. While many people think these laws are for dogs only, they do in fact apply to cats. As a pet owner, here's what you need to know:

- **Leash Law** – Dogs and cats must be on a leash when they are not on their own property. Failure for owners to leash them is considered a violation. Dogs and cats found unrestrained and off their property can be impounded for running at large.   Outside cats and inside/outside cats that are allowed to run at large are particularly problematic because they rarely have their rabies vaccination, a county license, or a collar with identification. Not only do these cats pose health risks to their humans by carrying diseases, bacteria, and fungi, but they kill millions of birds, rabbits, and rodents every year (upsetting the ecosystem). Animal control services spend time catching these cats, transporting them, adopting out or euthanizing them, and removing their bodies from roadways. The health departments spend time and money locating and inoculating people who have come in contact with these cats for Rabies and other diseases. Even though your cat may be spayed/neutered and vaccinated for rabies, they can still harbor plenty of bacteria, fungi, and diseases that can be serious health risks to humans. Humane cat traps are available to residents of the city, for catching stray and feral cats on their property.
- **Rabies Vaccination Law** – Dogs, cats, and ferrets are required by law to be vaccinated for rabies by the time they are four months old. Rabies vaccines need to be updated either yearly or every three years. Remember that the Rabies certificate issued by your vet is used as proof of the vaccination, but the Rabies tag or the vet bill is not.
- **County License Law** - Dogs, cats, and ferrets are also required by law to have a current county license properly attached to their collar. Not having a current county license is considered a violation, and not attaching the license to the collar is a separate violation.   A rabies certificate is required upon purchase of a license. For more information on licensing please call 240-487-3570.
- '**Pooper Scooper Law'** – Animal waste is not allowed to endure on any property. The owner of the cat or dog is responsible for removing the animal's waste on other's private property and public property, as well as on their own property, and disposing of it appropriately.
- **Animal Cruelty Laws** - There are variety of standards by which all pets must be kept in order to keep them safe and healthy. If dogs or cats are kept outside unattended they must have clean water available at all times, proper shelter to protect them, and proper space in which to move. Pets are also entitled to appropriate vet care when needed. Not providing these things for your pet is considered animal cruelty and neglect. For a list of Prince George's County "Proper Care Standards for Enforcement of Anti-Cruelty Laws" please see the link on our web site or call Animal Control at 240-487-3570.
- **Pit Bull Law** - Pit Bulls not previously registered in Prince George's County are illegal. Confiscation and euthanasia of the animal will result and the owner may be fined or face criminal prosecution. Definitions of "Pit Bull" include the American Staffordshire Terrier, American Pit Bull Terrier, and Staffordshire Bull Terrier, as well as any of their mixes.
- **Fees and Penalties** – Violation of these laws not only jeopardizes the health and safety of your pet, but it can cost you a considerable amount of money. Fines for violations range from $50-$100 for a first offence. Violations of anti-cruelty laws can cost up to $1,000 in fines or up to 90 days in jail or both.

For more information on Prince George's County or the City of College Park's animal laws, to borrow a humane trap, or to file a complaint, please call College Park Animal Control at 240-487-3570 or email vcooper@collegeparkmd.gov.